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AUTHOR	Dudley-Evans, Tony
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ABSTRACT

This discussion of the current state of instruction in English for Special Purposes (ESP) begins with a comprehensive definition of ESP that focuses on characteristics distinguishing it from other areas of English language teaching: specific language skill needs; specific genres and language related to them; and methodology reflecting the discipline(s) or professions to which the language needs relate. While generally offered at the level of higher education, ESP is also provided in the workplace or in adult education, and may be adapted for secondary education. These aspects of ESP instruction are examined: subject-specificity; the teaching of English for academic purposes; and the varied roles of the ESP teacher as instructor, course and materials designer, collaborator, and evaluator. An instructional example using a concordance to correct a technical text is included. Contains 10 references. (MSE)

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An Overview of ESP in the 1990s

Tony Dudley-Evans
The University of Birmingham, England

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Introduction

English for Specific Purposes is one of those activities where practitioners are so concerned with keeping up with the work and with discussing recent developments that they do not make time to define in any kind of detail exactly what they are doing. I propose to begin this short discussion of the current state of ESP with an attempt at a comprehensive definition of ESP.

We should first look at the question of *needs analysis*. Needs analysis remains fundamental to ESP and from the early days of ESP in the 1960s the starting point has always been what learners need to do with English. Learners may have an educational need or a professional need. For example, a NNS medical student whose first language is not English but is studying medicine through English is likely to use English to read textbooks and articles in English, to write case reports and examination answers, to listen to lectures and to participate in group discussion. These are educational needs. A practising doctor, however, will use English for consultation with patients, i.e. asking appropriate questions, giving opinions, giving reassurance, or in the case of doctors conducting research, for attending conferences, i.e. for giving papers, writing up papers for publication. These are professional needs.

A definition of ESP, however, requires much more than an acknowledgement of the importance of needs analysis. The establishment of needs is based on the activities that the learner has to perform in English, but this is only the first step; once we know which skills are needed and what activities learners will be engaged in, we need to carry out a more focused analysis of the genres and language involved in each of these skills and activities. We also need to establish what the underlying methodology of the discipline or profession of the learners is; this is because ESP is most effective when it makes use of the methodology that learners are familiar with in their educational studies or professional work. In other words, if learners are studying or working in engineering, the ESP course can make use of the problem solving methodology of engineering. If, by contrast, learners are working in or studying business, the case study approach will be familiar and can be used in the ESP class.

We see these three aspects, i.e., needs analysis, the analysis of genres and language related to these needs, and the use of the methodology of the disciplines or professions it is is serving for at least some of the time in materials in the classroom, as the absolute characteristics of ESP that distinguish it from other branches of English Language Teaching. There are a number of additional features that are often associated with ESP but cannot be seen as defining features. For example, ESP work is often designed for learners who have already begun to study English and are at an intermediate or even advanced level. However, ESP courses can in certain circumstances be designed for near beginners and certainly for false beginners (learners who have learnt very little from a taught course). Similarly, most ESP learners are adults, but some study ESP in the secondary school. We follow Strevens (1988) in seeing these as variable characteristics.

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A comprehensive definition should then list both absolute and variable characteristics. In a forthcoming book (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998), we give the following definition:

Absolute Characteristics

- ESP is designed to meet specific needs of the learner.
- ESP makes use of the underlying methodology and activities of the disciplines that it serves.
- ESP is centered on the language appropriate to these activities in terms of grammar, lexis, register, study skills, discourse and genre.

Variable Characteristics

- ESP may be related to or designed for specific disciplines.
- ESP may use, in specific teaching situations, a different methodology from that of General English.

ESP is likely to be designed for adult learners, either at a tertiary level institution or in a professional work situation. It could, however be designed for learners at secondary school level. ESP is generally designed for intermediate or advanced students. Most ESP courses assume some basic knowledge of the language system.

Subject Specific ESP

One point in the variable characteristics above should be clarified. It is a commonly held misconception that all ESP teaching and materials are specific to a particular discipline or profession, e.g., English for Physics, or English for Lawyers. While I believe that subject-specific teaching plays an important role in ESP, it is a mistake to consider that the term ESP should only be used when subject-specific work is involved. Where the focus in the class is on common-core skills or genres that belong to any discipline or profession, this is as much as ESP class as the more specific work. In this regard it is useful to distinguish English for General Academic Purposes (EGAP) and English for General Business Purposes (EGBP) from English for Specific Academic Purposes (ESAP) and English for Specific Business Purposes (ESBP), but they should all be seen as part of a broadly defined ESP.

A final point remains to be clarified. If a subject such as medicine or computing is taught in English, this is not in itself ESP teaching; it is content teaching. ESP has to involve the teaching of the language and the skills associated with a range of disciplines in the case of EGAP or one discipline in the case of ESAP. Materials will be devised based on the analysis of particular lexis and genres used by the discipline. The primary purpose is not to teach the subject content, but to provide learners with sufficient awareness of language, rhetoric and study skills to enable them to learn the subject content.

Roles of the ESP Teacher

The definition of ESP leads us into a discussion of the roles of the ESP teacher. Dudley-Evans and St. John suggest that there are five key roles:

1. Teacher
2. Course designer and materials designer
3. Collaborator
4. Researcher
5. Evaluator

We will look at each one of these in turn.

Teacher

The ESP teacher will clearly teach language. This will include the common-core lexis of the academic or professional worlds, and the language related to the key genres that learners will need to be able to use. But ESP teaching goes beyond teaching just language, it also involves teaching skills involved in the macro-skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking, such as the importance of listening or reading for meaning, the impórtance of writing for an audience, and developing learners' awareness of communicative strategies involved in the activities that they undertake. Training of ESP teachers should concentrate on both these areas and the ESP teachers need to take themselves seriously as specialists in the area of communication. A good ESP teacher is aware of the processes of the main macro-skills and of the way that a discipline or profession makes use of certain genres in their activities. We cannot expect the ESP teacher to be an expert in all these areas, but a curiosity about and a willingness to explore the ways in which professionals communicate and how these involve language is essential.

Course Designer and Materials Provider

The ESP teacher is usually responsible for selecting teaching materials for the ESP class. This will involve choosing an appropriate course book or set of materials when these exist, adapting an existing textbook or set of materials to make them suitable for use with a particular group, or writing material where no appropriate material exists.

The range of commercially available ESP materials varies; in the area of Business English a considerable amount of good material has been published in recent years. In EAP there is material available but there have been few new courses published in recent years. Very little subject specific material exists and it is here that ESP practitioner may need to devise their own. The term 'materials provider' was specifically chosen to emphasize our view that the ESP teacher should survey what is available, select units from a number of coursebooks adapting these if necessary, and write a number of extra units. Only where no suitable material is available should a whole set of new material be written.

Collaborator

I believe that it is essential that the ESP teacher enters into a dialogue with subject teachers in the academic world of professionals in the world of work. Part of the responsibility (and in my opinion a source of job satisfaction) of the ESP teacher is a willingness to engage with the disciplines or professions.It is of course possible to be successful as a ESP teacher without engaging in this dialogue, but this can only be done where all the pre-

liminary work finding out above the learners' needs and the context of their learning has already been carried out.

There are three stages in the process of engaging with the learners' discipline or profession. The first is cooperation, which involves finding out above learners' courses or work activities, the skills that they will need and the genres that they will use. This is essentially the same as needs analysis but may also involve a willingness to integrate the work of the ESP class with the subject course or the professional activity, and to draw on the content of the courses or work. The second is collaboration where the ESP teacher and the subject specialist work together to prepare materials for use in the ESP class. The subject specialist will provide texts or recordings for exploitation, or advise on questions or activities. Team teaching takes this a stage further and involves the language teacher and the subject specialist working together in the classroom to help learners with specific activities such as lecture comprehension, assignment or dissertation writing or whatever is required of them in their academic or professional context.

Evaluator

The ESP practitioner will be involved in two kinds of evaluation, the testing of learners' achievement during and at the end of a course and also whether the learner has the requisite skills to undertake an academic course in English or a particular career that requires a good mastery of English. The second of these - assessing a student's potential for studying in English - is important in countries such as Britain, USA, Australia and New Zealand where considerable numbers of international students come to study at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. A number of internationally recognised and validated exist for this purpose, namely the British and Australian IELTS examination, the British Northern Examination and Assessment Board's Test in ESOL and the American TOEFL. The IELTS Test and the Test in ESOL have an ESP focus, but not the TOEFL test.

Evaluation of courses and teaching materials should be carried out both during and at the end of the course. However, given that ESP courses are concerned with needs that relate to academic or professional purposes that follow on from the ESP course, it is important to gauge learners' ability to transfer what they have learnt on the ESP course to the actual activities that they have to carry out in English and to ask whether on the basis their actual experience in using English they feel that the ESP course has helped. Six months after the ESP course when learners are fully engaged in their academic course or their profession may be a good time to ask about the effectiveness of the ESP course and what additional aspects it should cover.

This discussion of the roles of the ESP teacher may seem a little daunting for teachers about to embark on ESP work for the first time. ESP work is probably more demanding that general ELT teaching, but the variety of the work and the contact with the learners' disciplines or professions provides an interest and a stimulation that is not necessarily present in other branches of ELT. I have already stated that the ESP teacher needs a certain curiosity about subject matter. I also believe that the ESP teacher often needs to act as a kind of consultant to the learners; they bring their subject knowledge, teachers bring their knowledge of the language system and of discourse. The working out in the classroom of how exactly learners can tackle the tasks expected of them can be difficult and challenging but in my opinion it is this challenge that makes ESP teaching interesting. ESP teaching should involve thinking on one's feet and also risk taking in the classroom.

I have emphasised that the ESP practitioner has a role as a researcher or at the very least in keeping up with the growing amount of research being published, especially in the field's main journal English for Specific Purposes. Two aspects of text analysis have gained particular prominence in recent years: genre analysis (Swales, 1990; Bhatia, 1993) and data driven learning (Johns, 1994).

The work in genre analysis associated particularly with John Swales has had a tremendous influence on ESP teaching and materials production. The analysis of writers'(or speakers')strategies for persuading the reader(or listener)of the validity of their claims and arguments and the categorisation of a set of 'moves' (Swales, 1981, 1990) that are regularly used to implement these strategies have provided a way into teaching both the 'higher level' strategies and the 'lower level' linguistic forms. Genre analysis is a very powerful tool that enables the teacher to understand and teach the appropriate rhetoric at the same time as the appropriate language.

Much recent work in genre analysis has concentrated on the 'higher level' aspects of academic stance (Berkenkotter & Huckin, 1995; Swales & Feak, 1994). Researchers have investigated issues such as what features seem to help a research proposal receive approval, why and how authors relate their own research to previous work in the field, whether they should acknowledge the limitations in their own research. These aspects of genre knowledge are vital for postgraduate students and young academics learning to write in English. But they also need help with the 'lower level' features such as the lexis and grammar (e.g., choice of reporting verb and tense in citation) and a range of lexical phrases typically used to express moves (e.g., the use of phrases such as the data are consistent with previously reported data to comment on experimental results). In this regard data driven learning has much to offer.

Johns (1994) has developed a technique for helping students learn from mistakes in lexical choice. Where the choice of a lexical item seems unnatural, he prints out concordance lines of the lexical item to show its correct use. He then prints out concordance lines to show the use of an alternative more natural lexical item. The following example where *presents some insight* is substituted for *offers some insight* comes from Johns' web page (http://sun1.bham.ac.uk/johnstf/revis012.htm).

The example is located on the next page.

This Kibbitzer is based on a suggested correction to the dissertation of a Farsi-speaking student of Economics:

Original	Revision
The variation of these ratios presents some insight about the financial intermediary role of banks.	The variation of these ratios offers some insight into the role of banks as financial intermediaries.

What attracted attention in the original was the slight oddity of the collocation **present + insight(s)**. We could find no example of this collocation in my data, while there were several examples of **offer + insight(s)** (with incidentally, the preposition **into**):

1 Scott-type inquiry is a mouthwatering one, **offering an insight into** the detai
2 ts own accord." Mr Aleksashenko's analysis **offers an insight into** the mess of
3 ersome fielding. Illingworth was unable to **offer any insight into** what other
4 ve Coogan, can make his creation last will **offer fascinating insights into** th
5 his vital and energetic performance, which **offered fresh insights** and perspec
6 its yolk and white, the rotation of nuclei **offers insights into** their fluid p
7 ard Williams nor the staging of Tom Hawkes **offered insights** or any justificat
8 t the writing is there from the first page, **offering insights into** Mammon . .
9 pe was her inspiration. This retrospective **offers new insight into** an artist
10 ry of the crumbling Maitland. But the show **offers no insight into** the reasons
11 es had been lost all those years but which **offered no insights** into why nativ
12 ve to say it's probably my mother.' Having **offered the insight** he has little
13 of specialisms on their own terms, and to **offer them insights** from other fie
14 There is little sense that rationality can **offer us insight** and progress into
15 tions for which there is no need. The book **offers useful insights** and will in

Offering insights (which may be fascinating (4), fresh (5), new (9) or useful (15)) is clearly more tentative and more modest than the activities associated with **present**: for example **presenting findings** (typically performed for an audience (16), at a conference (21 & 22) or meeting (25)):

16 tions, record findings, interpret data and **present findings** for different aud
17 pported the method used by the Guardian to **present findings**, but doubted whet
18 they can swop problems," said Dr Kahn, who **presented his findings** to the Scot
19 t immunity certificates. This inquiry will **present its findings** later this ye
20 s health by Global Sports Marketing, which **presented its findings** to clubs at
21 titute responsible for organising it will **present its findings** at a conferen
22 were in work. The campaign group, which **is presenting its findings** at a confe
23 asury's Economic Secretary, is also due to **present the findings** of a review i
24 wed as exceptional," said Fiona Smith, who **presented the findings** to the Inst
25 sity of Michigan geo-chemistry student who **presented the findings** to the annu
26 that Dr Sutcliffe and other experts would **present their findings** next month
27 ection group SOS Mata Atlantica. The group **presented the findings** of a five-y

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Conclusion

In this short paper I have attempted to define ESP itself and the roles of the ESP practitioner emphasising that the role goes beyond teaching. We have also illustrated some parts of recent research in ESP. I am aware that the role outlined in this paper will seem a very broad and demanding one. I hope that it does not appear too broad and too daunting. Those just beginning to teach ESP will almost certainly focus on the first two roles I have outlined: the ESP practitioner as teacher and the ESP practitioner as course designer and materials provider. As the practitioner gains experience and confidence, then s/he will begin to take on the other roles. In this way the role becomes certainly more challenging but also more stimulating and satisfying. It also becomes a very different role from that of the general ELT teacher.

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